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No. 0129-75
February 11, 1975

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Argentina: Leftist Electoral Aspirations

The badly splintered left wing of the Peronist movement may be trying to pump new life into its sagging image by forming a political coalition to represent it at the polls.

According to the authoritative El Cronista Commercial, the Peronist left is planning to launch a new "Partido Descamisado" (named after Peron's "shirtless ones"), and former president Hector Campora is being touted as the likely 1977 presidential contender. Campora has been in virtual political exile in Mexico since he resigned as ambassador to that country the week Peron died.

The trade journal claims that the new party will be inaugurated on March 11, the second anniversary of Campora's landslide victory. Then it reportedly would test the political waters in the Misiones provincial elections scheduled for April 13. The federal government is likely to have a firm grasp over the electoral machinery, however, and Orthodox Peronists can be expected to gain the upper hand.

The new party reportedly will be composed of dissident Peronist political groups and the radically-oriented Peronist Youth. The latter organization, which suffers from serious internal divisions, has taken a battering in the universities, its principal stronghold, as a result of the government's harsh crackdown on the left. Once beaten on its own turf, the left wing found itself with no real avenue of influence. This became all the more evident when most leftist-oriented newspapers and periodicals were shut down by official edict.

February 12, 1975

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C03192976

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C03192976

The rightward tilt of Mrs. Peron's administration has been largely responsible for driving the left wing of her party to the sidelines. Provincial governments headed by leftist Peronists were deposed one by one and intervened by federal authorities. In addition, large numbers of Argentines with leftist sympathies were forced to flee the country because of threats from quasi-official death squads.

Given the current murky political climate, the prospect for the new party does not appear auspicious. Although ousted Peronist leaders such as Campora and the deposed governor of Cordoba Province, Obregon Cano, are being mentioned as party leaders, the fear of assassination at the hands of the rightist Argentine Anticommunist Alliance may deter them from trying for a political comeback. [redacted] 3.5(c)

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